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Early Childhood Teacher Professionalism Based on Academic Qualifications and Work Experience

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the professionalism of early childhood teachers in mastering the material based on academic qualifications and work experience. The approach to research sequential explanatory mixed methods design; The first phase using descriptive quantitative involving 57 teachers, data were collected through a questionnaire, analyzed descriptively and inferentially assisted by SPSS version 26.0. The second phase used a holistic multi-case study involving six school principals, data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysis documents, analyzed interactively with the assistance of Nvivo 12.0. The results showed that there was no difference in teacher professionalism based on academic qualifications and work experience. The second phase finds; teacher professionalism is not only influenced by academic qualifications and work experience, teacher professionalism is also influenced by various professional trainings that have been attended, and prospective teachers who choose the early childhood education programs major do not fully understand the substance of the lecture program related to their professionalism.

Keywords: *early childhood teacher professionalism; academic qualifications; work experience; mastery of teaching materials*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis profesionalisme guru PAUD dalam menguasai materi berdasarkan kualifikasi akademik dan pengalaman kerja. Pendekatan penelitian *explanatory sequential mixed methods design*; fase pertama menggunakan kuantitatif deskriptif melibatkan 57 orang guru, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, dianalisis secara deskriptif dan inferensial berbantuan SPSS versi 26.0. Fase kedua menggunakan *holistic multi-case study* melibatkan enam orang kepala sekolah, data dikumpulkan melalui *in-depth interview* dan dokumen analisis, dianalisis secara interaktif berbantuan Nvivo 12.0. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tidak terdapat perbedaan profesionalisme guru berdasarkan kualifikasi akademik dan pengalaman kerja. Fase kedua mendapati; profesionalisme guru tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh kualifikasi akademik dan pengalaman kerja, dipengaruhi juga oleh berbagai pelatihan profesional yang pernah diikuti, dan calon guru yang memilih jurusan PAUD kurang memahami sepenuhnya substansi program perkuliahan terkait profesionalisme mereka.

Kata Kunci: *profesionalisme guru paud; kualifikasi akademik; pengalaman kerja; penguasaan materi ajar*

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INTRODUCTION

Based on various pieces of literature, a professional teacher in early childhood education programs is someone who has expertise and abilities in his field. This is characterized by an attitude that shows one's expertise in serving and contributing to the profession he is engaged in (Fonsén and Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019: 8; Turner, 2016: 14). Some literatures mention that the characteristics of teacher professionalism can also be seen through their knowledge, abilities, and mastery of the profession (Kunandar, 2007: 47; Li et al., 2010: 156; Wisnami, 2018: 33). This applies to the teachers who are at the early childhood education level. This literature is reinforced by the view that the professionalism of a teacher is characterized by self-regulation, special knowledge, and adherence to the code of ethics formulated by the profession (Evetts, 2006: 140; Nolan and Molla, 2017: 11; Svensson, 2006: 588; Woodrow, 2007: 236). Conversely, other literature says that early childhood teachers who do not master various teaching materials, media, and methods and who have not taken advantage of technological advances are teachers who do not have a professional attitude (Veisson and Kabaday, 2018: 11).

Several pieces of literature connect teacher professionalism to academic qualifications and work experience (Igberadja, 2016: 36; Nofriyanti and Nurhafizah, 2016: 678). Academic qualifications and work experience are the determining factors for teacher professionalism (Utami and Kartini, 2017: 182). Teacher professional qualifications are based on programs and academic degrees, which are assumed to affect teachers' mastery of teaching material (Easton-Brooks and Davis, 2009: 2; Kamila, 2017: 42; Manning et al., 2017: 20). The academic qualifications of early childhood teachers are described in National Education Ministry Regulation No. 16 of 2007 on *Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competencies*, which states "Teachers in PAUD/TK/RA must have a minimum educational qualification of diploma four (D4) or Bachelor (S1) in early childhood education or psychology obtained from an accredited study program". Various kinds of literature reveal that the work experience of early childhood teachers also affects the professionalism of teachers in mastering teaching materials (Idika and Onuoha, 2018: 100; Mitits, 2018: 28; Suwarni, 2011: 123), as the disposition of professionalism is obtained automatically from work experience in the field (Creasy and Hall, 2015: 23). The more experienced a teacher is, the higher the professionalism of the teacher in mastering the material (Isari et al., 2017: 22; Kholifiatin et al., 2020: 769).

Based on statistical data from the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, early childhood teachers with graduates >S1 are 72.81%, and 27.19% are graduates <S1. meanwhile, early childhood teachers majoring in early childhood education are 48.20%, non-early childhood education and no department are 51.80%. In Lampung, early childhood teachers with graduates >S1 are 61.86% and 38.14% for graduates <S1. meanwhile, 40, 09% of early childhood teachers come from the early childhood education department and 59.91% from the non- early childhood education department and not specified (nasrun et al., 2018: 29). based on the data above, there are still many early childhood teachers in Indonesia who do not have the qualifications as early childhood teachers as in the field, and it is often found that some teachers do not teach according to their fields (Sholihah et al., 2020: 2; Yusnita et al., 2018: 124). This is very much found in early childhood education itself (Yuslam et al., 2017: 152). Whereas according to Creasy & Hall (2015: 23), implementing the learning process according to the ability in the field is the focus and key of teacher professionalism, Mutohar also agrees with this opinion (Mutohar, 2013: 152).

Research related to teacher professionalism has been widely conducted by various previous researchers, including teacher professionalism and its relation to multimedia technology (Gluzman et al., 2018), teacher professionalism associated with the workshop (Johannes, 2018), teacher professionalism in the field of dual structure (Nairz-Wirth and Feldmann, 2019), the effect of teacher professionalism on teacher-child interactions (Her and Kim, 2018), the relationship between individual innovation and teacher professionalism (Parlar and Cansoy, 2017) and science-based and pedagogical professionalism (Dodillet et al.,

2019). However, relatively few researches on the professionalism of early childhood teachers related to academic qualifications and work experience have been conducted. Researches that are similar to this research tried to see the professionalism of early childhood teachers, especially about the efforts of teachers in developing the Education Unit Level Curriculum based on the 2013 Curriculum (Danur and Nurhafizah, 2019), teacher professionalism to improve the quality of learning (Lita, 2016), teacher professionalism based on academic qualifications and tenure at the primary and secondary education levels (Alamsyah et al., 2020; Putri Komalasari, 2014). Meanwhile, according to some previous literature, teacher professionalism is essential to be developed to motivate and improve early childhood learning outcomes (Armani and Margunani, 2017; Marlina et al., 2020; Puspitasari et al., 2021; Syaifulloh, 2017). In fact, this research tries to analyze the professionalism of Early Childhood Teachers in mastering teaching materials based on academic qualifications and work experience.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed approach with an sequential explanatory mixed methods design. This approach is characterized by collecting and analyzing quantitative data in the first stage and qualitative collection in the second stage (Creswell, 2017: 4; Sugiyono, 2011: 409). The first stage of this research uses descriptive quantitative involving 57 early childhood teachers in Sumber Jaya sub-district, West Lampung, taken through a total sampling technique. The data were collected using a questionnaire on Teacher Professionalism in Mastering Teaching Materials, which is derived from the theory of Maion Edmon, Santrock, Johnson, Jerry H. Makawimbang, and Suryasubrata. Some steps to make a questionnaire are (i) deriving research variables according to theory (making the instrument grid), (ii) determining the purpose of the questionnaire, (iii) determining the type of question, (iv) determining the scale for measuring the respondent's response, (v) determining the respondent from the questionnaire (vi) adjusting the language, type, and form of the questionnaire, and (vii) validating the questionnaire.

The validity and reliability of the instrument were tested before the questionnaire was distributed, 32 statements submitted were 25 valid and reliable statements, and seven statements were less valid and less reliable. Then the data analysis was carried out descriptively on the frequency of the teacher's answer score on the questionnaire, and two-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) parametric inferential data analysis assisted by SPSS v.26.0 software, this test is to see the effect of the individual and the combination of two independent variables on one dependent variable (Pallant, 2007: 257). provided that the data is normally distributed and homogeneous (Tabachnick, nd.: 221).

In the second stage, the researcher used a qualitative holistic multi-case study design. In-depth interview data was conducted with six school principals as research subjects selected by purposive sampling to provide value and information about early childhood teachers and researchers' professionalism as the key instrument of this study. Document analysis is carried out on diploma, certificate, and teacher performance assessment documents. Data analysis was carried out interactively, namely: collecting, reducing, presenting, and drawing conclusions on existing data using the Nvivo 12.0 software. This stage is carried out because in the sequential explanatory approach, the results of qualitative data are built on the results of quantitative data and are used to explain and describe quantitative data (Creswell, 2017: 4; Ivankova et al., 2009: 5) to strengthen the previous findings, more clearly the design in this study can be seen in chart 1.

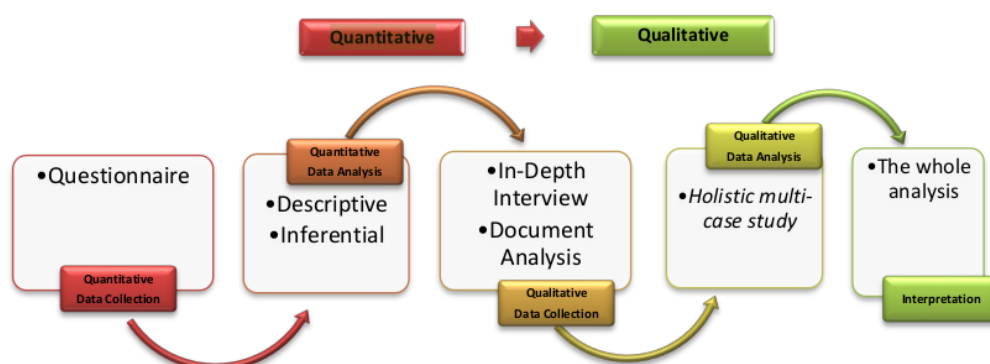


Chart 1. Sequential Explanatory Design

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The basis for determining the interpretation for the first research refers to the Penilaian Acuan Patokan (PAP) which is also called Criterion Referenced Evaluation (CRE) or Criterion Referenced Measurement (CRM), which was first used by Galser and Klaus (1962). The results showed that the teachers studied their overall professionalism were at a good level. More clearly can be seen in the table 1.

Table 1. Teacher Professionalism in Mastering Teaching Materials

Score	Frequency	Percentage	Interpretation
106 - 125	10	17.54%	Very high
91-105	42	73.69%	High
81- 90	5	8.77%	Enough
71-80	-	0%	Low
<71	-	0%	Very low
Total	57	100%	

The results of the second research concluded that there was no difference in the professionalism of early childhood teachers in mastering teaching materials based on academic qualifications and work experience, this can be seen in the table 2.

Table 2. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Early Childhood Teacher Professionalism

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Academic Qualifications	153,137	3	51,046	1,202	0.321
Work experience	190,038	3	63,346	1,492	0.231
Academic Qualifications * Work Experience	305,285	9	33,921	0.799	0.619

The results of the above research confirm that early childhood teachers basically have good professionalism. So it can be seen that the professionalism of early childhood teachers is very important for teachers to improve their quality and the quality of education (Fonsén and Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019: 6; Schachter et al., 2019: 1) where education can develop the maximum potential of children (Pahrudin et al., 2018: 83). In addition, teacher professionalism affects the learning process in the classroom (Jensen and Rasmussen, 2018: 1; Sintia et al.,

2019:1-2; Ubabuddin, 2018: 32). Providing a good learning process can make it easier for children to achieve maximum learning goals (Syafri et al., 2020: 2). This is because professionalism, teaching skills, and education quality are influenced and predicted by teachers' academic qualifications and work experience (Ackerman, 2005: 11; Putri Komalasari, 2014: 1; Sethi et al., 2018: 567; Setiawan, 2017: 39; Snider and Fu, 1990: 75; Vartuli, 1999: 489).

Own experience is based on higher education and is not only teacher-centered but also child-centered (Shipton, 2020: 14). This can be used as a way of educational development. So do not be surprised if the experience (soft skills and hard skills) is real (Fahmi and Hariasih, 2016: 81) and contributes to improving teacher professionalism. The experience that teachers have is important as it contributes to the success of early childhood education itself (Nusran et al., 2018: 80). So that early childhood teachers should have a good teaching experience.

Even so, the qualifications possessed by teachers are not the only cause of teacher professionalism in carrying out the learning process and improving early childhood learning outcomes (Easton-Brooks and Davis, 2019: 4; George et al., 2005: 418; Igberadja, 2016: 36; Nusa, 2020: 31-32; Phillips et al., 2000: 477). This is in line with the results of Toh et al.'s research, namely that academic qualifications and teaching experience are not related to teacher professionalism (Barida and Muarifah, 2019: 22; Toh et al., 1996: 231).

In addition to the results of quantitative analysis, the qualitative results are categorized into three aspects that affect the professionalism of early childhood teachers, namely (i) teacher professionalism is not only influenced by academic qualifications and work experience, (ii) teacher professionalism is also influenced by various professional trainings that have been attended, and (iii) prospective teachers who choose the early childhood education programs major do not fully understand the substance program related to their professionalism. Further data analysis results can be seen in the image 1.

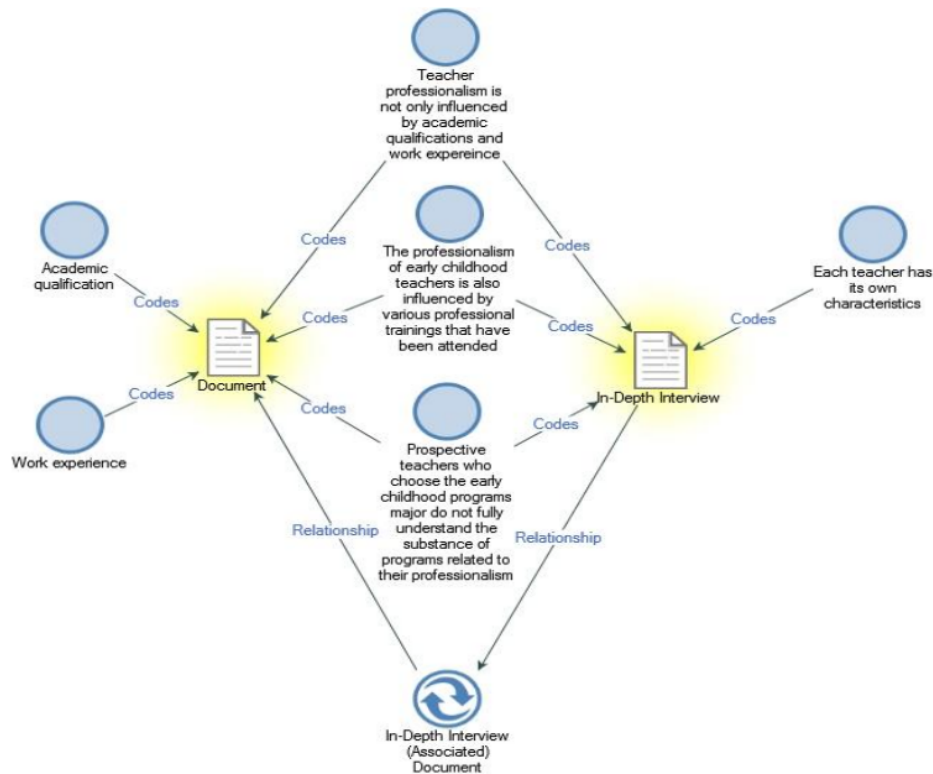


Figure 2. Data triangulation

Detailed information on the results of in-depth interviews to show other aspects that affect the professionalism of early childhood teachers has been recapitulated on the second mind map image.

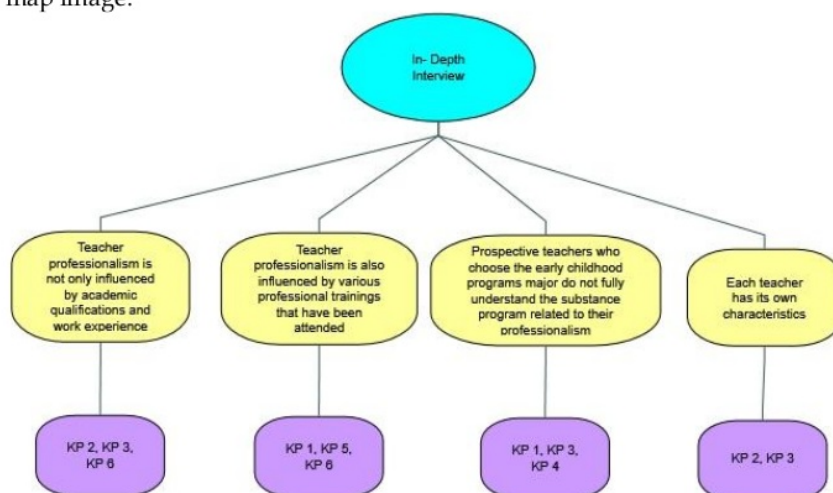


Figure 2. Aspects Affecting Teacher Professionalism

Aspects that affect professionalism obtained from the interview results are: The first aspect according to the Principal of early childhood education (KP) 2, 3 and 6 is that teacher professionalism is not only influenced by academic qualifications and work experience; Second, KP 1, 5 and 6 believe that teacher professionalism is also influenced by the various professional trainings that have been attended by teachers continuously; Third, KP 1, 3 and 4 agree that prospective teachers who choose the early childhood education department do not fully understand the substance of the lecture program related to their professionalism; Fourth, each teacher has its own characteristics which were expressed by the Principals of early childhood education 2 and 6 schools.

However, the results of the in-depth interviews with the early childhood education school principal must be in accordance with the existing documents in the institution itself. The professionalism of teachers can be recorded systematically. The results of the analysis documents can be seen in the third mind map image.

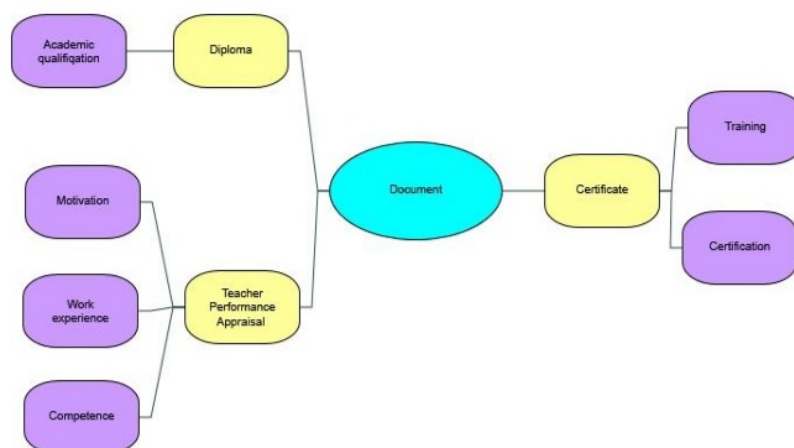


Figure 3. Analysis Documents

Many efforts must be made to improve the professionalism of early childhood teachers, but this requires government policies to develop teacher human resources (Muhadjir, 1992: 119). The results of the analysis of this study confirm that there is no difference in the professionalism of early childhood teachers in mastering teaching materials based on academic qualifications and years of service. This shows that many aspects affect teacher professionalism, both from within and outside the teacher himself (Kaya and Gödek, 2016: 1; Kusmaryani et al., 2016: 707).

Some aspects must also be considered in assessing teacher professionalism. These aspects are personality, salary, length of office, training, competence, principal leadership, work climate, support (family, morals, and costs), teaching motivation and interest in learning, availability of learning resources and media, and teacher mastery of the process. and teaching implementation (Danil, 2009: 36-37; Farida et al., 2020:2; Nurhayati, 2006: 68; Yawan, 2016: 184). In addition, other aspects such as gender and years of service also cause differences in the professionalism of early childhood teachers (Arien Majidah RH et al., 2019: 518) which continues to play an integral role in the world of education (Easton-Brooks and Davis, 2009: 2; Lee and Lee, 2020: 1).

Through various trainings, early childhood teachers have the opportunity to learn to continue to substantially improve their quality as a guarantee (Rahayu, et al., 2018: 3) in order to be considered professional and qualified. According to Nusa (2020: 27), certified teachers have better performance than those who are not certified. This is because teachers must have the ability and competence to be proactive teachers and understand skills in managing their own behavior (Syafri, et al., 2017: 1678). The improvement of teachers' self quality follows the training process that is followed (Kusumawardhani, 2017: 609).

Students need understanding, interest, and motivation to optimally carry out their education (Syafri, et al., 2017: 6). The community's assessment of early childhood education is the background of the nation's future view of early childhood education. Many early childhood education student-teachers think that the substance in early childhood education courses is less important, which certainly affects their readiness to become professional teachers. Though, early childhood education graduates are not guaranteed to get skills in their fields (Erlina et al., 2016: 7). Nevertheless, the formation of professional early childhood teachers must start when a teacher is still a prospective educator (Fenech et al., 2010: 90; Syafri, et al., 2017: 6), in order to produce quality teachers and make quality students as well (Arfah and Muhidin, 2018: 183; Ishak et al., 2003: 5), because teachers play an important role in learning in reducing and increasing children's learning motivation (Syafri, et al., 2020: 21; Syafri, et al., 2020: 953) and qualified teachers are able to convey knowledge consistently and attractively as the expression from Rahayu, et al., (2018: 6).

CONCLUSION

One of the professionalism of a teacher can be seen through the seriousness of the teacher in preparing good teaching materials before learning is carried out. The findings of this study found that teacher professionalism is not only influenced by academic qualifications and work experience. In fact, the professionalism of teachers needs to be seen from various aspects that influence the improvement of the quality of early childhood education at present and in the future.

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